

Thurmond Asks Senate To Debate in Secrecy

By J. A. O'LEARY

Star Staff Writer

The Senate today may lock its doors for a secret debate. Up for action is the \$15 billion weapons procurement bill.

Senator Thurmond, Democrat of South Carolina, leading a fight to include \$196 million to begin buying parts for the Nike-Zeus anti-missile missile, said he would move for a closed session because he wants to work with his colleagues on highly classified information.

Senator Russell of the Senate Armed Services Committee is supporting the Defense Department in its opposition to the Nike-Zeus weapon system. The Georgia Democrat said he would not object to a closed session, but saw no necessity for it.

Session Recalled

Senator Russell is one of the few still in the Senate who played a leading role in the last executive session, and he said it certainly failed of its purpose.

That session was arranged in 1953 to enable Senator Russell and other members of the Armed Services Committee to report on a tour of World War II battle fronts.

Senator Russell said what went on in that session "was all over the country and in the press before the session was concluded."

Senator Russell obtained an agreement that any votes will be made public.

Although Senator Thurmond won an upset victory when the Armed Services Committee approved his Nike-Zeus amendment, 9 to 8, informed sources say Senator Russell will have the votes to eliminate the item today.

The \$15 billion measure is the annual authorization for new planes, submarines, missiles and other weapons, but the House and Senate appropriation committees will have the final say later as to how much of this total shall be allowed.

Promise of Recess

The Pentagon wants to delay actual production of Nike-Zeus pending further research on another anti-missile missile.

Senator Mansfield has promised to let Senators join the House in a 10-day Easter recess if they pass the weapons procurement program today.

Until about 30 years ago the Senate closed its doors almost every day to confirm presidential appointments, on the theory that the qualifications and background of appointees could be discussed more frankly without injury to the nominees.

But closed sessions were abandoned after the roll call on a controversial nomination leaked out and was widely published.